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SUBJECT: CROATIAN BORDER POLICE NAB 53 ALBANIANS AT SLOVENE
BORDER

1. On October 24, Croatian border police discovered a group of 53 Albanian citizens, including 25 minors, trying to cross the Croatian-Slovene border hidden in a truck with Croatian license plates allegedly driven by a 27-year-old Croatian citizen. The Croatian and Slovenian press reported on the success of the border police operation, mentioning the importance of cooperation with neighboring country police officials (Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia, Austria and Germany) in cracking an international ring reportedly responsible for smuggling nearly 300 Albanians into the EU in the past six months.

2. Embassy Zagreb confirmed with the Government Office of Human Rights and with police sources that these cases are economic migrants, not human trafficking cases. Nevertheless, the cooperative nature of the operation to stop all kinds of illegal cross-border flows on the "Balkan route" is encouraging.
BRADTKE